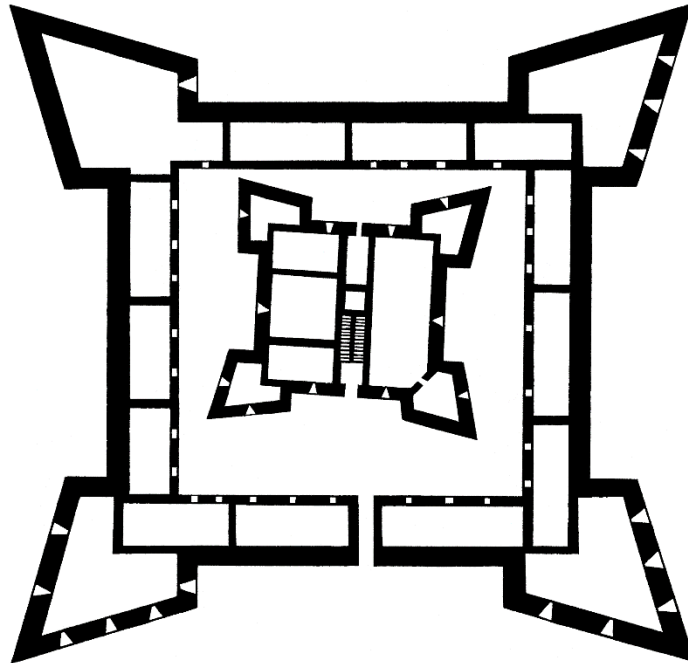


Gallery 1957

Langlands & Bell

The Past is Never Dead...It's not Even Past

17 October - 3 December 2019



Langlands & Bell, *Plan of English Fort Komenda, 1695 / 2019.*

This October, Gallery 1957, Accra presents a solo exhibition by artist duo Langlands & Bell. Titled, “*The Past is Never Dead...it's not Even Past*” the exhibition explores the architecture of the ‘Slave Forts’ built on the coast of Ghana by European traders and adventurers following the construction of Elmina Castle by the Portuguese in 1482.

Ben Langlands & Nikki Bell have conducted extensive research into Ghana’s historic European-built coastal architecture. Created as fortified trading posts, these structures quickly became ‘slave dungeons’, holding thousands of captives in appalling conditions before they were shipped to the Americas for a life of bondage and servitude. Today the forts bear witness to a shared history linking West Africa, the Americas, and Europe, which the artists describe as subject to a “wilful amnesia... forgotten especially (conveniently) in Europe”. Through site-exploration across Ghana, and further research at the Furley Collection, Balme Library, University of Legon, Accra, the Dutch National Archives, in The Hague, and The National Archives in London, their work for this exhibition reflects the artists’ continuing interest in the role strategic architecture plays in shaping all of our lives.

Gallery 1957

Working in a range of mediums and in collaboration with local artisans, Langlands & Bell will present a series of video, sculpture and appliqué works, some featuring the ground plans of the historic forts which bear similarity with Adinkra symbols - a traditional Akan visual language used extensively in Ghanaian fabrics and pottery. Restructuring the gallery space itself, the installation leads the viewer through the 'Door of No Return' modelled on the door at Elmina Castle which marked the final departure point of enslaved people from Ghana.



Castle of St George, Elmina, Ghana - The oldest European structure in sub-Saharan Africa. Courtesy the artists and Gallery 1957

“These forbidding structures, of which more than 50 were built in Ghana and up to 20 remain, are concrete evidence of the relationships that existed between West Africa, Europe and the Americas over a period of almost four centuries. They are an important part of global history because they’re evidence of a global network of trade and economic and political relationships that evolved over centuries, and in many senses is still with us because it underlies so much of today’s world. They speak volumes; whether one is Ghanaian, European or American the forts have the power to connect each of us with our own past, our own cultural history.”

The exhibition is curated by Jonathan Watkins, director of Ikon, Birmingham.

Langlands & Bell’s exhibition at Gallery 1957 coincides with Ghana’s “Year of Return” - a year-long initiative encouraging members of the African diaspora to visit Ghana; the event marks 400 years since the beginning of the ‘Middle Passage’ - the voyage that transported millions of Africans against their will to work as slaves in the Americas.

Gallery1957

About Langlands & Bell

Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell are based in London and have been collaborating since 1978. Their art ranges from film and video to interactive digital media, sculpture, installation and full-scale architecture using a conceptual and aesthetic framework to explore the structures we inhabit and the networks of communication and exchange that surround us.

Langlands & Bell have shown widely internationally throughout their career including, Serpentine Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, British Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern and V&A in London; Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Haus Der Kunst, Hamburger Bahnhof, Germany; MoMA, New York, Yale Center for British Art, USA; Venice Biennale, Seoul Biennale, and CCA Kitakyushu and TN Probe, Tokyo, Japan.

In 2002 Langlands & Bell were commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, London, to visit Afghanistan to research “The Aftermath of September 11 and the War in Afghanistan”. They were nominated for the Turner Prize and won a BAFTA for “The House of Osama bin Laden” the trilogy of artworks they made after their return to London.

Major permanent art works in the public realm by Langlands & Bell include *Moving World (Night & Day)*, 2008, London Heathrow Terminal 5; *Call & Response*, 2012, Porte de Vincennes, Paris, and *Beauty < Immortality*, 2016, Piccadilly Circus Underground station, London.

About Gallery 1957

Based in Accra and working internationally, Gallery 1957 has a curatorial focus on West Africa. The gallery presents a programme of exhibitions, installations and performances by the region’s most significant artists currently bridging the gap between local and international practices. Founded by Marwan Zakhem in 2016, Gallery 1957 has evolved from over 15 years of private collecting. Opened in 2017, Gallery 1957 II is the gallery’s second space, situated in Accra’s Galleria Mall. The gallery serves as a vital platform, promoting West Africa’s presence within the art scene by hosting ambitious exhibitions, providing resources for residencies and participating in international art fairs.

www.gallery1957.com

@Gallery1957

For press information and images please contact:

Emma Gilhooly or Rebekah Humphries at Pelham Communications

Tel: +44 (0) 208 969 3959

Email: emma@pelhamcommunications.com or

rebekah@pelhamcommunications.com

Exhibition: Langlands & Bell: *The Past is Never Dead...it’s Not Even Past*

Gallery 1957

Dates: 17 October - 3 December 2019

Address: Gallery 1957 II, Galleria Mall Gold Coast City, PMB 66 — Ministries, Gamel Abdul Nasser Avenue, Ridge — Accra, Ghana

Telephone: +233 303967575